

May is NATIONAL BARBECUE MONTH

How to grill the perfect burger



Could any food be as simplistic and delicious at the same time as a patty of beef on top of a crusty bun, served with lettuce, tomato and your choice of condiments? Burgers are the go-to item for barbecues, campouts, fast-food meals, and late night trips to the diner. A juicy burger can satisfy so many cravings in one sitting.

If ever there was a recipe to master, it would be grilling the perfect burger. Though barbecued burgers may seem easy to make, all too often burgers are botched by a few mistakes. But don't worry, burger mastery is within reach if you follow these simple tips.

* Begin with fresh meat. Freshly ground meat will produce the best flavor. If you are unsure when the packaged ground beef was made, ask the butcher or someone in the meat department of the supermarket to grind you up a fresh batch. Otherwise, use a food processor or an attachment on a stand mixer to grind the meat yourself.

* Fat has flavor. If you're going to indulge in a burger, make sure it has a fair amount of fat content. Fat helps keep the burgers moist and juicy. Make sure the fat content is about 18 to 20 percent of the mix. This helps to guarantee flavorful burgers.

* Keep the meat cold. Chilled burger patties will firm up and hold their shape better during cooking. Leave the pre-made patties in the refrigerator until the last minute. Keep patties on ice if you will be cooking burgers in batches.

* Don't overhandle the meat. Compressing the meat and handling it too much can lead to dry, dense burgers. Avoid tough meat

by handling it as little as possible. Keep your hands wet while shaping the patties so they'll come together easily.

* Oil up the grill. A clean, well-oiled grill prevents burgers from sticking during cooking.

* Make sure the grill is super-hot. The goal is to cook burgers over high heat and fast. This is achieved with a very hot grill. It may only take three to five minutes per side to cook the burgers, depending on the thickness of the patty.

* Flip only once. Wait until the burgers have been grilling for a few minutes and release easily from the grill grate. Flip them over and allow them to cook a few minutes more. This helps keep the juices inside the meat and prevents your burgers from turning into burnt hockey pucks.

* Resist the urge to squash the burgers. Pushing down on the burgers with the spatula will only force the juices out. If you want dry burgers, press them down. If you want nice, juicy burgers, step away from the spatula.

* Allow the burgers to rest. Take the burgers off the grill and let them rest for 5 minutes so that all of their juice redistributes through the patty. Toast your hamburger buns and then serve the burgers with your favorite toppings.

Dig in and enjoy your efforts, as well as the compliments from other diners.

■ Metro Creative Connections

The right grilling tool is gold to the backyard chef

(MS) – Recent improvements in the design and engineering of gas grills have transformed the art of grilling. From searing and rotisserie cooking to planking and smoking, gas grills now provide chefs with several different grilling techniques to develop flavours, textures and aromas. With a quality gas grill, the right set of features and a few key accessories, the culinary possibilities for a backyard chef are endless.

Chef Naz Cavallaro, a grilling expert from Broil King, shares his must-have tools for creating restaurant style meals at home, as follows:

Stone Grill Set: Bake restaurant-quality pizza and bread with this durable stone grill set. Barbecued pizza provides a more authentic pie since the hot, dry air in your grill yields a much better result than preparing it in a conventional oven.

Gourmet Burger Press: It makes perfect patties right at home. Grill enthusiasts will love experimenting with the endless menu possibilities this burger press provides. Options include Greek-style



burgers stuffed with feta cheese, roasted red peppers and olives, and Tex-Mex-style burgers stuffed with jalapeno and cheddar.

Wood Chips and Planks: Deep smoky flavours and fall-off-the-bone tenderness are hallmarks of traditional barbecue cuisine. Create those authentic flavours at home using wooden planks, smoker boxes and flavoured wood chips. From the pungent flavours of hickory and mesquite to the sweeter, more delicate apple and cherry, several different types of chips are available and suited to specific cuts of meat.

Roast Rack: A roast that

is slow-cooked on a grill delivers amazing flavour and texture. Look for a rack that can accommodate a drip pan so you can catch all of the juices from the food.

For best results, Chef Naz also recommends a gas grill designed with these performance features: excellent heat retention; searing power and flavour vaporization at the grids; full coverage stainless steel flavour wave, or heat medium; precise heat control; a side burner and a rotisserie burner.

Read more about grilling and get some great recipes ideas at broilkingbbq.com.

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Keep pests away from entertaining areas

Outdoor entertaining is one of the joys of nicer weather. People routinely gather on the patio or around the pool when the weather warms up, and such recreational activities can foster companionship and reduce stress. However, if nuisance animals and insects are sharing entertaining spaces, these pests can quickly put a damper on the festivities.

While it may seem impossible to keep an

outdoor entertaining area completely pest-free, there are ways to keep such unwanted intrusions manageable.

Identify common pests
Yard pests vary depending on geography, so the first step is to figure out which pests are native to your area. Mosquitoes can be found in many locales, but certain insects may be exclusive to specific regions. For example, palmetto bugs are native to moist, tropical areas, such as the southeastern United States.

In addition to insects, squirrels, moles, raccoons, and other rodents may also descend on a property. Neighborhoods that abut natural ecosystems or infringe on wild animals' habitats may see a wider array of animals encroach-

ing on entertaining spaces. Deer, bears, coyotes, and certain bird species can present their own brands of trouble. Homeowners new to an area may have to experience a learning curve to determine which pests are common to a certain area, as well as which seasons bring which creatures.

Try natural repellents first

To minimize damage to the environment and to protect local wildlife, homeowners should exhaust natural ways to repel pests before resorting to less eco-friendly methods. Animals can be kept out of a yard with fences and other barriers, such as thorny bushes. Many pests

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